

REVIEW ESSAY

A MAJOR
HEBREW DICTIONARY
PROJECT COMPLETED

by

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Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner. *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*. 3rd edition, newly edited by Johann Jakob Stamm, in collaboration with Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, Benedikt Hartmann, and Philippe H. Reymond, No. IV, ראיה-חשע. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990. 579 pp.

To paraphrase Qohelet, of the making of Hebrew dictionaries there is no end. As proof, we can point to the venerable project of L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, launched in the 1940s, which culminated in their *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (henceforth KB) in 1953. No sooner had the *Lexicon* appeared than it became apparent that a new edition would have to be produced. Thus, after the substantially similar second edition of 1957 appeared, serious work toward a thorough revising of the dictionary began

in 1958. The first three volumes appeared in 1967, 1974, and 1983 under the title *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* (henceforth *HALAT*). Now, with the appearance of the volume under review, the Hebrew portion of the dictionary is complete. (A fifth volume covering the biblical Aramaic vocabulary is scheduled to appear in the next few years.) Of course, during the many years of the project, the original authors have passed on, as has one subsequent laborer, the great E. Y. Kutscher. But through the diligent work of the four lexicographers whose names appear on the title page, we have before us the crowning glory of a half-century of research in ancient Hebrew lexicography.¹

In the remarks that follow, I shall focus on this last volume of *HALAT* (henceforth *HALAT IV*), but some of the comments are equally pertinent for the first three volumes. To start, I mention two points made in the preface which reveal the distinctive aspects of this volume: (1) for entries with debated etymologies and for biblical passages with varying interpretations, there is a much more detailed presentation of the various scholarly views; and (2) for nouns, there is a complete listing of all verbs collocated therewith. Both of these features greatly increase the value of this volume, the former for those interested in comparative material, and the latter for those investigating semantic fields and the like.

This volume appeared in late 1990, but much of the work clearly was completed years earlier. Thus, for most of the entries, the bibliographic references cease in 1982. Only in rare instances are later works cited, and even then there is a tendency toward works written by the authors or their close colleagues (thus, see p. 1099 for a 1987 book by Ben-Ḥayyim; p. 1193 for a 1983 work by A. Tal, an Israeli colleague of Ben-Ḥayyim in the field of Samaritan studies; and p. 1230 for a 1984 article by K. Seybold, a Swiss colleague of Stamm and Hartmann). Only toward the end of the book are more recent works by other authors cited (for example, see p. 1639 for a 1988 article by M. Görg; and p. 1646 for a 1989 book by E. Güting); obviously these entries, appearing at the end of the volume, were written or brought up-to-date in the last stages of the book's production.

Unlike KB, where Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic scripts were used, *HALAT* employs only the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek scripts; all other foreign

1. For an inside view of the history of the project, see J. J. Stamm, "Bericht über den Stand der Arbeit an der 3. Auflage des hebräischen und aramäischen Wörterbuches von Ludwig Koehler und Walter Baumgartner," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 45 (1989): 277–289.

material occurs in transliteration. For the biblical scholar not seasoned in reading texts in these Semitic languages, this change will be most welcome. KB gave all translations and explanations in both German and English, and while this was useful to users more proficient in English, I for one often found it annoying or confusing to scan an entry and read German and English side-by-side. The *HALAT* text is solely in German, and while this will prove to be difficult for many, in reality it makes the presentation of the material much smoother.

The comparative material in *HALAT* is outstanding. Older material, available at the time of KB but not included therein, is present in the new edition. For example, under ראש 'head', KB (p. 865) listed the cognates in Ugaritic, Akkadian, Phoenician, Aramaic, Arabic, and Ethiopic. *HALAT* (p. 1086) does likewise, of course, but it goes further by citing also the evidence from Tell el-Amarna (EA 264:18 *ru-sū-nu*), the Egyptian syllabic orthography (*ru-'u-š*), every attested Phoenician and Punic spelling (ראש, ראש, ראש), the Epigraphic South Arabian cognate (*r's*), the LXX transcription (2 Sam. 15:23 *ρως*), the traditional pronunciation among the Samaritans (*re'oš*), a presumed Egyptian cognate (*ršī* 'Gipfel e. Berges'), and a possible attestation in Moabite (Mesha Stele 20 רשה 'seine Abteilung, seine Anführer' [?]). All of this material was known at the time of KB, but it is found only here in *HALAT*. Then the new edition includes even more information which has come to light in the last forty years, e.g. the word's attestation in the Dead Sea Scrolls (cited according to K. G. Kuhn, *Konkordanz zu den Qumrantexten* [Göttingen, 1960]) and in the Deir 'Alla text (2:11). The result is a comparativist's dream!

But as complete as the comparative material may appear, still there are new resources which were not consulted. Eblaite is referred to now and then, but there is too great an emphasis placed on the evidence of personal names. The source cited is often H. P. Müller, "Das eblaitische Verbalsystem nach den bisher veröffentlichten Personennamen," in L. Cagni, ed., *La lingua di Ebla* (Naples, 1981), pp. 211–233. This is a very important article, but as everyone knows, caution must be observed in extracting lexicographic information from personal names. Furthermore, with all due respect to M. J. Dahood, it is a waste of print to refer to his proposal to interpret the city name *ti-ba-ù^{ki}* as including the word תבה and thus to be translated 'Er ist die Arche' (p. 1547). In any case, far better for etymological comparison is the material culled from the administrative texts and the bilingual dictionaries. To cite one example, the entry תפוח 'apple' (p. 1632) makes no mention of

the Eblaite cognate *du-bù-u*, (the discussion in *HALAT* cites a work from as recent as 1987; the Eblaite form was discussed in several places earlier, e.g., A. Archi and M. G. Biga, *Testi amministrativi di vario contenuto* [Archivi Reali di Ebla, Testi 3; Rome, 1982]; and E. Zurro, "Notas de lexicografía eblaíta: Nombres de árboles y plantas," *Aula Orientalis* 1 [1983]: 268–269).

Another lexicographical resource not consulted in *HALAT* is the series of lexicons produced by T. M. Johnstone for the Modern South Arabian languages. The first two dictionaries, *Ḥarsūsi Lexicon* (London, 1977) and *Jibbāli Lexicon* (London, 1981), were available for use in *HALAT IV*; the third book, *Mehri Lexicon* (London, 1987), might have been utilized at the end of the project. The Modern South Arabian languages contain many cognates to Hebrew lexemes; see, e.g., G. A. Rendsburg, "Hebrew *RHM* = 'Rain'," *Vetus Testamentum* 33 (1989): 357–362 (and see also below on תלפיות). On the other hand, *HALAT* has taken into consideration the cognates adduced by W. Leslau, *Ethiopic and South Arabic Contributions to the Hebrew Lexicon* (Berkeley, 1958), a volume written in response to the original KB.

Obviously, new collateral information has yielded new meanings and/or new etymologies for Hebrew words. A prime example is the root שחע 'sich fürchten' (pp. 1540–41), based on Phoenician and Ugaritic evidence (and demonstrated most prominently by J. C. Greenfield); in KB (p. 1000) attestations of this verb were listed under the Hitpa'el of שעה.

Occasionally, new suggestions are made based on older material. For example, whereas KB (p. 956) offered no etymology for שורע I 'um Hilfe rufen', *HALAT* (p. 1339) presents the excellent proposal to relate this word to Arabic *ḡawaḡa* (with metathesis) with the same meaning (first proposed by L. Kopf). The noun חשועה 'Hilfe, Rettung, Sieg' (p. 1657) is also derived from this root.

At times *HALAT* includes entries which may not be found in other dictionaries. In such cases, the reader is duly cautioned that the existence of such a word or such a meaning is conjectured. An example of this kind is שלח IV (p. 1405), presumably the name of a Canaanite deity Selah (argued most strongly by M. Tsevat).

To exemplify the first of the two new aspects of *HALAT IV* mentioned above, I present the case of Zech. 7:2 רגם מלך. In KB (p. 873), this reading is dismissed in one line, accepting the emendation of E. Sellin to רב מג המלך. In *HALAT IV* (p. 1108), by contrast, there is an extended discussion giving

several possibilities, two of which involve no emendation of the text, and the third of which is Sellin's proposal. In all three cases, there is ample bibliography for further reading, and in the case of the emendation to *רב מן המלך*, *HALAT* (unlike *KB*) gives the basis for this suggestion, namely, the reading of the Syriac text.

To illustrate the second innovation of *HALAT IV*, I present the example of the noun *רמה* 'lance' (p. 1159), where we learn that quite a large variety of verbs is used with this noun, not only the expected verbs, such as *אחזו*, *לקח*, etc., but a rare verb such as the Hiph'il of *נשק* 'kindle' in Ezek. 39:9 (in the context of the annihilation of Gog). In addition, in this entry *HALAT IV* includes a list of all other weaponry appearing with *רמה* in the same verse, e.g., *מגן* and *חרב*. But we also learn that *רמה* appears with *נשק* 'weapon' in Ezek. 39:9. Thus, a close scrutiny of this entry reveals the collocation of *נשק* (Hiph'il) and *נשק* in the same verse, thus allowing the identification of a wordplay (indeed, one rarely noted by scholars, though see I. M. Casanowicz, *Paronomasia in the Old Testament* [Baltimore, 1892; reprint ed., Jerusalem, 1971], p. 67).

For many entries, the student of semantics will find greatly expanded treatments. For example, in *KB* (p. 923), the Qal of *שכר* was defined as 'um Lohn im Dienst nehmen, dingen', and thirteen examples of this verb were listed thereunder. The only other instance of the Qal of *שכר* is in Gen. 30:16, where the special meaning 'e. Mann (für e. Nacht) mieten' was given. In *HALAT* (p. 1240), the group of thirteen passages from *KB* is now subdivided into two distinct definitions, with eight cases of 'um Lohn in Dienst nehmen, dingen,' and five cases of 'mieten, dingen gegen'. This is, of course, only a fine distinction, but it demonstrates the refinement undertaken in the search for accurate meanings in the decades of research behind *HALAT*. Moreover, a check of the passages in question revealed that the decision to distinguish these meanings was warranted. (The Gen. 30:16 instance is again treated separately.)

For semantic studies, another feature which is especially helpful is the long list of "Einzelnes" which accompanies many entries. After the basic meanings of a word are given, particular usages are given special attention. Again, *KB* included this feature too, but *HALAT* is much richer in this regard. So, for example, under *שדה* 'Flur, Feld', *KB* (p. 916) had only three lines of text with four specific examples (and only one defined). *HALAT* (p. 1220), on the other hand, has forty-nine lines of text, with many particular usages of *שדה*, copious bibliography, citations of the versions, etc.

The spread of Hebrew words into European languages usually is not included in dictionaries of ancient Hebrew, and no comprehensive attempt is made here either. Thus, it is a bit odd to find under the entry שכור 'betrunken' the mention of Yiddish *schicker*. The question immediately arises: why was this lexeme noted and not the many others? Is it possible that this Yiddish word is better known to speakers of German than are other Hebraisms in Yiddish? I simply do not know, but the inclusion of Yiddish *schicker* here remains a curiosity nonetheless.

In what follows I include some brief comments on specific items in the dictionary. In these remarks, I rely heavily on my own research. I acknowledge, of course, that any other user of *HALAT* could create a similar list based on his or her own work.

רבע II (pp. 1101–02): The meaning 'Staub' for this lexeme in Num. 23:10 is now well established. But for additional discussion, see H. R. (C.) Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic* (Missoula, Mont., 1978), pp. 37–39. In fact, this useful volume was not utilized at all by *HALAT* IV.

רהט II and רהיט (p. 1114): The wealth of information presented for these two words from Song 7:6 and Song 1:17, respectively, should be supplemented by the discussions in M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (Garden City, N.Y., 1977), pp. 361–62, 630. Pope's commentary has excellent discussions on many words in Song of Songs, and it too is not cited in *HALAT* IV.

רעה III (p. 1177): From this root, meaning 'desire', *HALAT* reckons only with nominal forms, e.g., רעותה. But as a verb it may be detected in Song 1:7 in an excellent case of Janus parallelism. With the meaning 'shepherd', the form תרעה parallels the following verb תרביץ 'cause to lie down'; with the meaning 'desire', the pivot word parallels the preceding word אהבה 'love' (note that the root רעה here is the Israelian Hebrew and Aramaic equivalent of Judahite Hebrew רצה). I owe this interpretation to my student Scott Noegel.

רעה (pp. 1177–79): The meaning 'Böses' for this common noun is clear. But in Exod. 10:10 it carries the additional hint of the Egyptian sun-god Ra. See G. A. Rendsburg, "The Egyptian Sun-God Ra in the Pentateuch," *Henoch* 10 (1988): 3–15.

רשף (p. 1210): A major work not cited is W. J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, 1976).

רשאות (p. 1206): Many commentators are willing to admit this word in Gen. 49:3, with the meaning 'authority'. My only question is: why assume a *sin* and not a *šin* here?

שוח (p. 1223): See now G. A. Rendsburg, “Hebrew *św/yḥ* and Arabic *šḥḥ*,” in Y. L. Arbeitman, ed., *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman* (Amsterdam, 1988), pp. 419–430; and G.A. Rendsburg, “שוח in IQS 7.15,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 5 (1989): 83–94. In these articles I propose the meaning ‘urinate, defecate’ in Gen. 24:63 and in the cited Qumran text.

ש (p. 1271): For the vocalization *š* (with *shwa*) in a few biblical passages, see S. Morag, “On the Historical Validity of the Vocalization of the Hebrew Bible,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94 (1974): 308–309.

שוח (p. 1335): In Gen. 14:17, the toponym עמק שוח is glossed as עמק המלך.² Accordingly, the meaning ‘king’ for שוח should be assumed, especially in light of the Ugaritic verb *ṭwy* ‘govern’. See A. A. Wieder, “Ugaritic-Hebrew Lexicographical Notes,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965): 160–162; and C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome, 1967), p. 501. The former also proposed this root in the verbal form in Ps. 89:20 (discussed in *HALAT* [pp. 1334–35] under שוח II ‘hinlegen’).

שכח II (p. 1381): In the lengthy discussion concerning תשכח in Ps. 137:5, one finds no mention of I. Eitan, “An Identification of *tiškaḥ yēmīnī*, Ps 137:5,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 47 (1928): 193–195, which in my mind is the best interpretation of the word to date. According to Eitan, תשכח here is cognate to the Arabic root *ksh* ‘be paralyzed’ (with metathesis). See further G. A. Rendsburg and S. L. Rendsburg, “Physiological and Philological Notes to Psalm 137,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* (in press).

שנן I (pp. 1483–84): The form אשתונן in Ps. 73:21, glossed by *HALAT* as ‘sich scharf gestochen fühlen’, is not related to this entry, for which all other attestations are the Qal of the verb meaning ‘schärfen’. Instead, this verb means ‘cry, weep, lament’ (cf. Ugaritic *yšnn* in *UT* 125:12) and was so utilized by medieval Hebrew poets. For details see Y. Avishur, “וכליחי אשתונן” (תהלים עג, כא), *Leshonenu* 44 (1979–80): 263–267.

2. Probably, the lexeme שוח was archaic and had to be updated by the gloss מלך. Similarly, the syntax was updated: the expression עמק שוח has no definite article; the newer term עמק המלך occurs with the definite article. The former usage is typical of the Late Bronze Age (compare Ugaritic, where the definite article is unattested); the latter is typical of the Iron Age, when the innovative definite article was introduced. The lack of a definite article also can be witnessed in Gen. 14:10, where the form הרה means ‘to the mountain’ (the Masoretic pointing creates a compromise form in attempting to introduce a definite article; the Samaritan Pentateuch simply presents the newer usage הרהה). These facts and others point to the relative antiquity of Genesis 14; in the widespread debate over the date of this crucial chapter, the linguistic evidence has not been brought to bear.

תלפיות (p. 1603): This *hapax legomenon* in Song 4:4 continues to create difficulties for scholars. The best that *HALAT* can do is repeat the suggestion of A. M. Honeymann and others to derive the Hebrew word from an Arabic cognate *lafa'a* 'in Reihen ordnen'. I here propose a novel approach, to relate תלפיות to a Modern South Arabian verb *lfy* 'to be able to climb (a ladder, a mountain) easily' (thus Johnstone, *Mehri Lexicon*, pp. 251–252). The form of the Hebrew noun shows that it comes from a IIIy root, not a III' one. תלפיות would then mean something like 'ladders, staircases, towers', a definition which fits the context of Song 4:4 perfectly.

I began this review essay with the statement that of the making of Hebrew dictionaries there is no end. Indeed, as *HALAT* approached its end stages, at least two new multivolume dictionaries began to appear, namely, D. J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. 1 (Sheffield, 1992); and R. Meyer and H. Donner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1987) (this latter project is still another reworking, namely the eighteenth edition, of the lexical research of Wilhelm Gesenius). But regardless of these volumes, still in their early stages, one feels confident with the summary statement that *HALAT* is the outstanding dictionary of Biblical Hebrew available today. The innovations introduced in *HALAT IV* make the work even more valuable. To be sure, there are omissions and errors, and the good scholar still will have to check all references for himself. As an example, I send the reader to A. Wolters, "Not Rescue But Destruction: Rereading Exodus 15:8," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 52 (1990): 230–232, where the *HALAT* entry for נר II 'Damm' is examined closely and is found to be deficient in many regards. But such difficulties notwithstanding, the third revised edition of Koehler and Baumgartner's original work is a major and valuable resource to students of ancient Hebrew.

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